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United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Region V  
POLLUTION REPORT

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



257080

**Date:** Thursday, June 01, 2006

**From:** Mike Ribordy, OSC

**To:** Linda Nachowicz, U.S. EPA  
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**Subject:** Acme Chicago Coke Site  
11236 South Torrence Avenue, Chicago, IL  
Latitude: 41.6917  
Longitude: -87.5597

|                          |                         |                            |                |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>POLREP No.:</b>       | 1                       | <b>Site #:</b>             | B5AY           |
| <b>Reporting Period:</b> | 10/05/2005 - 05/31/2006 | <b>D.O. #:</b>             |                |
| <b>Start Date:</b>       | 10/5/2005               | <b>Response Authority:</b> | CERCLA         |
| <b>Mob Date:</b>         | 10/5/2005               | <b>Response Type:</b>      | Time-Critical  |
| <b>Completion Date:</b>  |                         | <b>NPL Status:</b>         | Non NPL        |
| <b>CERCLIS ID #:</b>     | ILN000509241            | <b>Incident Category:</b>  | Removal Action |
| <b>RCRIS ID #:</b>       |                         | <b>Contract #</b>          |                |

**Site Description**

The Acme Chicago Coke Plant is located at 11236 South Torrence Avenue, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. The approximately 102-acre Site is located in a primarily industrial area located less than 2 mile from a residential area. The Site is comprised of approximately 20 buildings, including two coke batteries, power house, maintenance building, and by-products building. A chain-link fence surrounds the Site; however, the Site is unrestricted due to vandals cutting the fence and locks. The nearest waterway is the Calumet River located approximately 0.25 miles east of the facility.

The Acme Chicago Coke plant is located on Torrence Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. Coal was received by truck and converted to coke for use in the blast furnace. A by-products plant was operated to recover tar, ammonia, and light oil from coke oven gas, and remove impurities from the gas. An ammonium sulfate solution was produced using ammonia removed from the gas. The cleaned gas was used for underfire fuel for the coke batteries, and fuel for the blast furnace stoves and boilers. The coke was transferred to the blast furnace using an 11,000 foot long covered conveyer system.

On September 28, 1998, Acme Metals and its subsidiaries filed separate voluntary petitions for protection and reorganization under Chapter 11 of the United States Bankruptcy Code. In June 2001, the Company entered into a contract for the sale of Alpha Tube to AK Steel. Also in 2001, the Company began a shut-down of the operating facilities and liquidation of the

working capital assets of Acme Steel.

On October 10, 2002, International Steel Group (ISG) purchased a portion of the assets of Acme Steel from bankruptcy. The bankruptcy proceedings are now closed and an order of abandonment was issued for the unsold assets of Acme Metals including, apparently, the Chicago Coke Plant. Currently, there is not an identified owner of the real property comprising the Site.

During the week of July 29, 2002, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) conducted a site assessment at each of the following Acme properties: Riverdale, Chicago Coke, and Chicago Furnace Plants. The purpose of the site assessment was to determine the threats to human health and the environment at the closed down portions of the Acme Steel Company facilities. On August 1, 2002, U.S. EPA inspected the Chicago Coke Plant. Concerns identified at the Chicago Coke Plant included:

- ☐ Profile and dispose of cyanide sand from sand filter.
- ☐ Hole in perimeter fence
- ☐ Impoundments containing sediment
- ☐ Naptha odor in and around buildings in center of facility
- ☐ Uncontainerized lead batteries at facility

On November 24, 2004, representatives from U.S. EPA, Superfund Division, Emergency Response Branch, and a representative from the Chicago Department of the Environment (Chicago DOE) conducted a site inspection at the Acme Chicago Coke Plant. The purpose of the inspection was to determine whether the current conditions at the Site pose an immediate threat to public health, welfare, and the environment.

The following was observed during the November 24, 2004, inspection:

There were a number of tanks and containers present throughout the Site. Markings on the containers indicated the presence of corrosives, solvents, oils, paints, and cleaners in addition to unknown materials in unmarked containers. Friable asbestos materials were found inside buildings and in the surrounding soils. Some of the potential hazardous wastes and/or hazardous constituents had leaked from the abandoned and deteriorated containers. Coke byproducts and wastes have been deposited in soils throughout the property including wetland areas. A large segment of the chain link perimeter fence in front of the facility had been removed and replaced with an orange snow fence. Other gaps in the fence were also present.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) conducted an combined assessment of the Site during the week of May 2, 2005. Concentrations of organic contaminants in over half (8 out of 15) samples exceeded the removal action limites (RALs) for industrial properties. Contaminants of concern include benzo(a)pyrene, benzo(a)anthracene, de benzo(a,h)anthracene, benzidine, and benzo(b)flouranthene.

The Chicago DOE inspected the Site in April 2005 and believes conditions at the Site have

continued to deteriorate. Some of its findings include:

- Although the missing section of fence at the front of the facility has been replaced, there are still several holes in the perimeter fence which allow unrestricted access to the Site. In addition, the locks at the front entrance have been broken.
- Scavengers appear to be entering the Site on a frequent basis. Numerous transformers are now missing, turned over, or damaged. Others appear to be staged for future removal.

### **Current Activities**

On October 5 and 6, 2005, U.S. EPA and the Emergency Rapid Response Services Contractor (ERRS) mobilized to the site to begin site security measures. Several sections of the perimeter fence were repaired on the south and north sides of the property. Scrappers had been trespassing on the site and damaging transformers for the copper wire and removing piping and equipment which often had asbestos wrap. A soil berm was also created along certain sections of the fence line to further prevent trespassing onto the site.

On November 22, 2005, U.S. EPA and the ERRS contractor returned to the site to repair the main gate which vandals had damaged allowing unrestricted access to the site.

On December 19, 2005, U.S. EPA and the ERRS contractor once again made fence repairs and created trenches and a berm in several areas where scrappers continued to gain entry into the site. Samples were collected from material inside a pipe cut down by a scrapper and from two transformers damaged by scrappers.

Results from the December 19 sampling event indicated that a large transformer damaged by scrappers contained oil with high levels of PCBs. Soil beneath the transformer was also contaminated with PCBs.

On January 16, 2006, ERRS wrapped the transformer in plastic, put PCB stickers on the transformer and placed caution tape around the area until arrangements could be made to further delineate the extent of PCB contaminated soils and remove the transformer.

On February 13, 2006, additional soil samples were taken to further delineate soil contamination around the damaged PCB transformer and other areas where soil staining had occurred.

On February 26, 2006, the PCB containing oil from the damaged transformer was emptied into drums. Both drums and the transformer carcass were transported off-site for disposal.

On April 26-27, 2006, PCB contaminated soil at the location of the damaged transformer was excavated and transported off-site for disposal. Confirmation soil samples were collected in the excavation to determine whether all contaminated soil was removed above the cleanup objective of 25 mg/kg total PCBs.

During the month of May, all buildings were searched and all miscellaneous drums, totes and

containers were collected and staged in the Power House Building. Lead-acid batteries found throughout the facility were also being collected and staged in the Power House Building. A tote filled with oil that was leaking into the sewer line was emptied and the oil contaminated soils excavated, stockpiled on-site and covered. The contractor also began excavating and stockpiling cyanide contaminated soils in a rolloff box. These materials will be characterized for off-site disposal. Samples were collected from above-ground tanks with material inside them.

Additional PCB soil was excavated and transported off-site for disposal in the former area of the damaged PCB transformer. Confirmation samples taken on April 27 indicated that elevated concentrations of PCBs remained in the excavation. Confirmation samples collected after the additional excavation indicated that PCBs were below 1 part per million.

### **Planned Removal Actions**

U.S. EPA will continue to characterize the miscellaneous drums and container staged in the Power House building for eventual off-site disposal.

Cyanide contaminated soils will continue to be excavated and stockpiled in a roll off box for disposal.

The sewer and drainage system is currently being looked at to determine whether contamination is still being discharged to the vessel slips located on the Calumet River.

Evaluate extent of asbestos contamination present outside the site buildings.

### **Estimated Costs \***

|                           | <b>Budgeted</b>     | <b>Total To<br/>Date</b> | <b>Remaining</b>   | <b>%<br/>Remaining</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Extramural Costs</b>   |                     |                          |                    |                        |
| ERRS - Cleanup Contractor | \$150,000.00        | \$85,000.00              | \$65,000.00        | 43.33%                 |
| RST/START                 | \$7,800.00          | \$2,900.00               | \$4,900.00         | 62.82%                 |
| <b>Intramural Costs</b>   |                     |                          |                    |                        |
| <b>Total Site Costs</b>   | <b>\$157,800.00</b> | <b>\$87,900.00</b>       | <b>\$69,900.00</b> | <b>44.30%</b>          |

\* The above accounting of expenditures is an estimate based on figures known to the OSC at the time this report was written. The OSC does not necessarily receive specific figures on final payments made to any contractor(s). Other financial data which the OSC must rely upon may not be entirely up-to-date. The cost accounting provided in this report does not necessarily represent an exact monetary figure which the government may include in any claim for cost recovery.

### **Disposition of Wastes**

| <b>Waste Stream</b>                           | <b>Quantity</b> | <b>Manifest #</b> | <b>Disposal Facility</b>                    |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| PCB Liquid Mixture<br>PCB Transformer Carcass | 3 drums         | IL 11328956       | Onyx Environmental Svcs, LLC<br>Phoenix, AZ |
| PCB Contaminated Soil                         | 19,954          | MI 9351982        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soils                        | 20,000          | MI 9351983        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soils                        | 19,760          | MI 9351988        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soils                        | 20,500          | MI 9351987        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soil                         | 19,500          | MI 9351985        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soil                         | 19,750          | MI 9351984        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soil                         | 19,250          | MI 9351986        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soil                         | 20,000          | MI 8253107        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |
| PCB Contaminated Soil                         | 20,000          | MI 8253108        | EQ-Wayne Disposal Inc.                      |

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